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## WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT



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# Disaster Tips for People with Mobility Disabilities

The following information will assist people with mobility disabilities and will help make them more confident when disaster strikes.

## Storage

- Store emergency supplies in a pack or backpack attached to a walker, wheelchair, scooter, etc.
- Store needed mobility aids (canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs) close to you in a consistent, convenient and secured location. Keep extra aids in several locations, if possible.

## Emergency supply kit

- Keep a pair of heavy gloves in your supply kit to use while wheeling or making your way over glass or debris.
- If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, consider having an extra battery available. A car battery can be substituted for a wheelchair battery, but this type of battery will not last as long as a wheelchair's deep-cycle battery. Check with your vendor to see if you will be able to charge batteries by either connecting jumper cables to a vehicle battery or by connecting batteries to a specific type of converter that plugs into your vehicle's cigarette lighter in the event of loss of electricity.
- If your chair does not have puncture-proof tires, keep a patch kit or can of "seal-in-air product" to repair flat tires, or keep an extra supply of inner tubes.
- Store a lightweight manual wheelchair, if available.

## Know your surroundings

- Arrange and secure furniture and other items to provide paths of travel and barrier free passages.
- If you spend time above the first floor of a building with an elevator, plan and practice using alternative methods of evacuation. If needed, enlist the help of your personal support network.

- If you cannot use stairs, discuss lifting and carrying techniques that will work for you. There will be instances where wheelchair users will have to leave their chairs behind in order to safely evacuate a structure.
- Sometimes transporting someone down stairs is not a practical solution unless there are at least two or more strong people to control the chair. Therefore, it is very important to discuss the safest way to transport you if you need to be carried, and alert them to any areas of vulnerability. For example, the traditional "fire fighter's carry" may be hazardous for some people with respiratory weakness.
- You need to be able to give brief instructions regarding how to move you.

This fact sheet is part of the *Disaster Preparation Handbook 2004* prepared by the Washington State Department of Health and the Washington Military Department's Emergency Management Division.